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Message Text

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44
ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /031 W
---------- 119895
P R 250015Z JUL 74
FM AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1410
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

S E C R E T TRIPOLI 0825

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, LY, UR, EG
SUBJECT: SOVIET ARMS SALES TO LIBYA

SUMMARY: NORTHROP PAGE REPRESENTATIVE WHO HAS TALKED WITH LIBYAN OFFICERS JUST BACK FROM MOSCOW SAYS THAT LIBYA HAS CONCLUDED A MAJOR ARMS DEAL WITH THE SOVIET UNION. HIS INFORMATION TENDS TO CONFIRM OTHER, SIMILAR REPORTS THAT SOVIETS HAVE PROMISED RAPID DELIVERY OF A WIDE RANGE OF SOPHISTICATED MILITARY EQUIPMENT. THIS MAKES LITTLE SENSE IF INTENT IS MERELY TO EQUIP LIBYA'S SMALL, ILL-TRAINED ARMY, AND WE SUGGEST THAT A TARGET OF SUCH AN ARMS DEAL MIGHT BE PRESIDENT SADAT. QADHAFI MAY REASON THAT HE COULD USE SOVIET-SUPPLIED WEAPONS AS A MEANS OF INCREASING HIS INFLUENCE IN EGYPT, PARTICULARLY AMONG EGYPTIAN MILITARY AS WELL AS IN PREPERATION FOR A FIFTH ARAB-ISRAELI WAR. WE WOULD EXPECT QADHAFI AND HIS COLLEAGUES TO OPPOSE ANY SOVIET ATTEMPTTO TRADE ARMS FOR EXCLUSIVE INFLUENCE IN LIBYA, HOWEVER, AND NORTHROP PAGE CONTINUES TO HOPE LIBYANS WILL CLOSE DEAL FOR AN AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM SOON. END SUMMARY.

1. NORTHROP PAGE VP KINNALLY, BACK IN LIBYA TO TRY TO CLOSE HIS COMPANY'S SALE OF AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM, HAS BEEN TALKING TO LIBYAN OFFICERS WHO WERE MEMBERS OF MILITARY DELEGATION WHICH RETURNED FROM MOSCOW JULY 19. THESE OFFICERS SAY, ACCORDING TO KINNALLY, THAT DELEGATION CON-
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CLUDED MAJOR ARMS DEAL WITH SOVIET UNION. AS THEY DESCRIBE

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IT, PACKAGE IS COMPREHENSIVE OF AND INCLUDES BATTERIES
OF SAM MISSILES, LARGE NUMBER OF MIG'S TANKS, AND OTHER
ARMORED VEHICLES. KINNALLY SAID LIBYANS WERE DELIGHTED
BY QUICK DELIVERY TIME SOVIETS PROMISED, WHICH SUGGESTED
THEY WERE TAKING THE ITEMS DIRECTLY FROM INVENTORIES,
THEIRS AND THOSE OF SATELLITES. ONE SAM SITE OUTSIDE
EX-WHEELUS AIR BASE HAD ALREADY BEEN INSTALLED AND MADE
OPERATIONAL INSIDE THREE WEEKS. KINNALLY'S INFORMATION,
WHICH WE BELEIVE IS RELIABLE, TENDS TO CONFIRM OTHER REPORTS
OF IMPENDING SOVIET ARMS SHIPMENTS TO LIBYA, WHICH ALSO
SPEAL OF PATROL BOATS, RADAR, SA-6 AND 7 MISSILES, AND
EVEN SUBMARINES.

2. COMMENT: IF THESE REPORTS OF RAPID LARGE DELIVERIES
PROVE TO BE ACCURATE, THIS IS STARTLING DEVELOPMENT. UNTIL
RECENTLY SOVIET EMBASSY OFFICERS HERE HAVE BEEN GOING OUT
OF THEUR WAY IN CONVERSATIONS WITH WESTERN DIPLOMATS TO
DENY ANY INTENTION OF SELLING OFFENSIVE ARMS TO LIBYA IN
QUANITY. ARMS SALES TO LIBYA OF THIS MAGNITUDE ABD
SOPHISTICATION MAKE LITTLE SENSE IF INTENTION IS TO EQUIP
LIBYA'S ILL-TRAINED 20,000 MAN ARMY, SINCE BOTH
MAINTENANCE AND OPERATION OF SUCH EQUIPMENT WOULD SEEM TO
BE WELL BEYOND LIBYA'S CAPABILITY.

3. WE SUGGEST THAT ON LIBYAN SIDE A PRINCIPAL TARGET OF
SUCH ARMS DEAL WITH SOVIETS MIGHT BE PRESIDENT SADAT.
WITH SOCIET ARMS SES TO EGYPT BLOCKED, QADHAFI COULD
USE SOVIER ARMS IN HIS POSSESSION AS MEANS OF EXERTING
PRESSURE ON SADAT. DURING OCTOBER WAR QADHAFI EMPTIED
LIBYA'S MILITARY STORES TO SUPPLY EGYPTIAN ARMY WITH EQUIP-
MENT WORTH HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS, INCLUDING TANKS
AND MIRAGES. SINCE QADHAFI SAYS HE IS CONVINCED THAT
FIFTH ARAB-ISRAELI WAR IS INEVITABLE AND THAT U.S. PEACE
EFFORTS WILL FAIL, HE AN ARGUE THAT HE IS MAKING HIS
PREPERATIONS NOW, WITH OPTION OF TURNING SOVIET-SUPPLIED
EQUIPMENT OVER TO EGYPT WHEN CRUNCH COMES; IN MEANTIME,
HE CAN USE IT AS BAIT TO DANGLE IN FRONT OF EGYPTIAN MILITARY,
INCREASING HIS INFLUENCE IN EGYPT. IN QAFHAFI'S MIND, THIS
WOULD BE BLOW FOR ARAB UNITY. IN THIS CONNECTION, WE NOTE
THAT LIBYAN RADIO BROADCASTS TO ARAB WORLD ARE CALLING ON
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"LEADERS OF ARAB ARMIES" TO BE READY TO FACE DANGER
AHEAD. WE LEAVE ANY ASSESSMENT OF SOVIET MOTIVES TO OTHERS,
BUT ON FACE OF IT QADHAFI'S AMBITIONS IN EGYPT WOULD SEEM
TO FALL IN WELL WITH SOVIET ANGER AT SADAT.

4. WE CONTINUE TO THINK THAT SOVIET-LIBYAN RELATIONS WILL
BE CHARACTORIZED BY DISTRUST AND SUSPICION, AND WOULD EXPECT
QADHAFI AND HIS COLLEAGUES TO REACT WITH QUICK HOSTILITY

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TO ANY SOVIET ATTEMPT TO TRADE ARMS FOR EXCLUSIVE
INFLUENCE. KINNALLY SAID THAT HE REMIANED CONFIDENT THAT
NORTHROP PAGE WAS WELL PLACED TO GET AIR DEFENSE CONTRACT.
HE HOPES LIBYANS WILL SIGN IT IN NEXT FEW DAYS, BUT MADE
NO PREDICTIONS.
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